



Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance

Cattaraugus, Chautauqua and Erie Counties

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LEWPA Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 27, 2025 at 1:00 pm

Webex

Voting Board Members present: Cattaraugus: Jake Kelly (Vice-chair), Connor Maxwell; Chautauqua: Cassie Pinkoski (Chair), Rebecca Wurster; Erie: Mark Gaston (Treasurer), Bonnie Lawrence (Secretary), William Smith.

Others in attendance: Joanna Panasiewicz (Coordinator), Sandra Notaro, Jeanne Beiter, Kristin Fitzgerald, Stephany Tatarevich, Erin Kane, Bryan Hinterberger, Kim Peck, Wendy Paterson, Josh Balisteri.

MINUTES

1. **Call to order** by Chair Pinkoski at 1:05 pm.
2. **Welcome and introductions** around the virtual room
3. **Approval of November 26, 2024 minutes.** A motion was made by M. Gaston to accept the minutes as emailed, was seconded by J. Kelly, and was carried.
4. **Financial report by Treasurer.** M. Gaston reported that at the last meeting the account had \$104,357.25. Received state funding \$250,000 for year 2.2 close-out and year 2.4 advance combined. Three payments were made, one to each county for \$70,650 each. LEWPA Coordinator services for year 2.3 for \$32,200 was paid. \$165 for Coordinator attendance at Watershed Symposium was paid. \$181.85 was earned in three months of interest. Total came to \$110,224.10 (\$100k for Erie County for LEWPA Coordinator). A motion to approve the Treasurer's Report as read was made by B. Lawrence, was seconded by J. Kelly, and was carried.
5. **Intermunicipal Agreement update** – J. Panasiewicz reported that the LEWPA Intermunicipal Agreement second amendment extending the agreement through December 31, 2029 was signed by all three counties and was fully executed on January 31, 2025. Wet ink signatures have been sent to the law departments for all three counties and the electronic version was sent to the Board of Directors on February 5, 2025.
6. **Outreach** – J. Panasiewicz reported that the Cattaraugus County Farmer Neighbor Dinner is April 9th. Cattaraugus SWCD has offered to share their table with us for no cost to LEWPA. J. Panasiewicz asked if anyone is able to table if she can't make it. M. Gaston may be able to table, if needed. If no one can help table, Cattaraugus County SWCD can host LEWPA information at their table.
7. **NYSEPF funding:**
 - a. **Year 2.3** – C. Pinkoski reported Chautauqua County wrapped up most projects. Coastal landscape studies should be completed March 1st. Will schedule close-out with J. Panasiewicz later this spring. J. Kelly reported has Cattaraugus County projects are ready to go to bid shortly for Grannis Creek/Thatcher Brook and Forty Road stabilizations. They are hoping to complete Allen Springs revegetation project by June/July 2025. M. Gaston reported Erie County projects are mostly complete. The Daemen College salt study should be completed in May. Some sites need additional planting this spring.

- b. Year 2.4 – C. Pinkoski reported that two stabilizations and some planting projects are left to complete. J. Kelly reported stream table arrived and Mansfield Creek project is in survey and design phase to be ready for June. M. Gaston reported that hydroseeding and buffers are scheduled this spring. Erie County contracted with BN Waterkeeper for Cradle Beach project. Crump Brook with Craneridge Association erosion and sediment control project will be underway this summer. The Rail Trail Phase 1 project is underway. The Cazenovia Creek stabilization with Kissing Bridge is delayed due to property sale but hopefully will be underway this summer.
- c. Year 2.5 – K. Fitzgerald will check what FY the 3rd DEC contract starts with and when to start drafting that with LEWPA.
Cattaraugus County Projects – J. Kelly reported V. Cattaraugus erosion near a well on a tributary to Cattaraugus needs attention. Considering a feasibility study at Ashford Triangle and Buttermilk Creek and continuing hydroseeding.

Chautauqua County Projects – C. Pinkoski reported considering a feasibility study to reconnect floodplain at mouth of Chautauqua Creek, hydroseeding, boat stewards, town highway erosion control in ditches but may change since permitting is taking longer.

Wetland permit discussion followed. There would be one more wetland biologist permit person added in Region 9 if State Budget increase is approved. SWCD has some frustrations around timing and delays of projects due to permits taking longer. [Webinar recording for wetland permit changes.](#)
[General permits are out for comment by March 12th.](#)

Erie County Projects - M. Gaston reported considering WNY Land Conservancy for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid surveys and treatment along preserves along Hunter Creek. T. Hamburg for green infrastructure for municipal parking lot stormwater runoff. Hydroseeding and riparian buffer planting. Erie Catt Rail Trail West Branch Cazenovia Creek stream stabilization phase 2 to restore trail connectivity. Eighteenmile Creek tributary streambank stabilization.

Proposal from BN Waterkeeper for shoreline projects in Evans (site assessments leading to development of summary report and public education). \$13,005 from LEWPA admin funding available to help fund this project. This funding from LEWPA will be able to help head start work to be done from upcoming DEC and Wilson Foundation funding. A motion to accept the proposal for funding utilizing LEWPA general funding in the second contract was made by M. Gaston, was seconded by C. Pinkoski, and was carried.

- 8. **USEPA project updates** – M. Gaston reported that funding is still available as of right now.
 - a. Dunkirk project – C. Pinkoski reported signage is underway and invasive species management left to complete.
 - b. Muddy Creek project – B. Smith reported public meeting was fairly-well attended. Flooding concerns on impacts on the park. The project will go out to bid this spring.
 - c. Cattaraugus Creek project – M. Gaston reported that they had meetings with adjacent landowners who are on board with the project. Design is about 90% complete. Jurisdictional wetland determination has been submitted. Limited window for construction so hoping the DEC decision goes quickly. Plan for second stream bank stabilization the following year.

- d. Discussion on future EPA potential projects and ECSWCD admin needs – M. Gaston to add admin percentage to future projects. Audits are not as expensive as he originally thought. No one was in opposition to this idea.

EPA GLRI funding should be okay for now with the recent change in federal administration. Potential for additional Cattaraugus Creek Watershed stabilizations and some Dunkirk projects (Cedar Beach and Memorial Park) for future list for DEC. Point Gratiot improvements should look for other funding sources instead.

9. **NYS Ag. & Markets funding Ecosystem Based Management Funding** – M. Gaston reported that Chautauqua County has two completed projects and a third project ready and waiting for permit. There is one Cattaraugus County landowner project that fell apart. Erie County has two projects ready to go, but waiting for permits. May do one year no-cost time extension into 2026.

10. Watershed Management Plan Update:

- a. SVAP update – J. Panasiewicz reported that Stream Visual Assessment Protocol is complete. GIS intern starts March 10th to visualize the last of the data and update Watershed Plan maps. Desktop audit from Scoby Dam to Zoar Valley underway by SWCD to see about erosion and buffers by end of March.
- b. Future planning – J. Panasiewicz reported that she is in talks with DEC around goal setting for phosphorus and translating the USGS modeling report recommendations. She is also talking with NY Sea Grant and NYSDOS to consider next steps with the Watershed Plan. Because of the delay in the USGS report, the funding ran out in 2024 and there is still much work to happen. Will hopefully apply for a CFA this year. Considering an educational component working with NY Sea Grant to utilize their technical expertise on some municipally-oriented resources such as sub-watershed committees, scenario planning and follow-up from the Lake Erie Watershed Regulation Review project. Other thoughts on next step needs?

C. Pinkoski proposed an idea about potential wetlands and education to Chautauqua municipalities. B. Smith supported C. Pinkoski's idea. Code Enforcement Officers don't necessarily understand how new wetland regulations affect them. If every parcel has wetlands, is whole parcel is affected?

K. Fitzgerald reported on a blind characterization tool from Great Lakes Action Agenda that DEC is working on. May highlight topics and areas to focus. It's a dashboard that we could point to if it our project matches those priorities.

11. County Representative update reports:

- a. Cattaraugus County – J. Kelly reported \$1.9 million for cover and flare project in Elton Creek watershed. Two Cattaraugus Creek projects in Agriculture and Nonpoint Source Pollution Program submitted. Looking to grow Agricultural Environmental Management program.
- b. Chautauqua County – C. Pinkoski reported that two WQIP grants for \$573k in Canadaway Creek sub-watershed and \$143k in Cattaraugus Creek Sub-watershed have been awarded. They are waiting for State contracts.
- c. Erie County – M. Gaston reported the tree and shrub program is open until February 28th. Three Agriculture and Nonpoint Source Pollution applications were submitted. A few Climate Resilient Farming projects are in various stages including jurisdictional wetland determinations review. B.

Lawrence reported a concern with losing Erie County's \$5.2 million USDA Forest Service tree grant funding due to recent change in federal administration.

12. **NYSDEC update** – K. Fitzgerald reported on Great Lakes Commission [Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program](#) funding, application due April 29th. USDA gives funding for sediment and nutrients control (stabilization, cover cropping and nutrient planning). M. Gaston gets funding to Erie County, but other local counties have not. M. Gaston helping Wyoming County submit and application in Buffalo River headwaters.

K. Fitzgerald reported that funding is available from the New York State DOS and DEC through the Environmental Bond Act for climate resiliency projects. This includes a Resilient Watersheds Grant Program for \$45 million from the DEC, Inland Flooding and Local Waterfront Revitalization Implementation Projects Program for \$15 million from the DOS, and Coastal Rehabilitation and Resilience Projects Program for \$20 million from the DOS. Applications are due June 6th through the CFA. Informational webinar is on March 12th. The Cattaraugus IWAP final report should come out soon to stakeholder committee.

S. Tatarevich reported on wetland reconnection enhancement project on Smoke Creek is being considered through NOAA. City of Lackawanna will be involved and have input on design. Implementation not a part of the project. Also notified the group that the Resilient NY spreadsheet shows projects and costs/benefits. J. Panasiewicz to share spreadsheet with meeting minutes.

13. **Announcements and open discussion** –

W. Paterson said she is thinking of applying to the CFA for a Wendt Beach project.

14. **Adjourn** – A motion to adjourn was made at 2.57 pm by M. Gaston, was seconded by J. Kelly, and was carried.

Next meeting is May 22nd at 1 pm via Webex.

Meeting Minutes transcribed by J. Panasiewicz and S. Notaro and submitted by B. Lawrence